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The World on Time

PM's visit to US Govt refutes BNP's allegations

The government has refuted the allegations made by BNP regarding the Prime Minister's visit to the United States, reports BSS.

The BNP's comment on the Prime Minister's visit is not only baseless and untrue, but also disgraceful and utterly devoid of courtesy, said an official handout.

It said the PM's visit to the United States is not sponsored by the government exchequer and this tour does not violate any rules of the Constitution.

The Prime Minister himself takes every important official decisions and actions are being taken following her directives.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad and Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister are communicating every happenings to the head of the government.

The handout also said the allegations of irresponsibilities and carelessness of the Prime Minister about people's sufferings are also baseless.

Every day the Prime Minister is enquiring about relief and rehabilitation activities in the flood-hit areas from the United States, it added.

Khulna BCL leader killed

KHULNA, July 24: The body of a pro-Awami League Chhatra League leader was recovered from a house in the city today, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip-off, police raided an under-construction three-storey building of Alo Super Market at Khan A Sabur Road and found the body of Bikash Saha, 22, hanging from the ceiling.

Police suspected Bikash, son of one Dulal Chandra Saha of Beni Babu Road, might have been beaten to death.

Two killed in road accident

From Our Correspondent
NARAYANGANJ, July 24: Two persons were killed in a road accident on the Narayanganj-Demra road this morning. One of the victims was identified as Noor Mohammad, 55 while the identity of the other aged about 12, could not be known.

Liftman dies

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authorities, police rushed to the spot and recovered the body from the lift's passage.

Police said Omar Ali was operating the lift by generator as electricity supply was snapped at about 5 pm on Wednesday. But they suspected that he was trapped when the generator was stopped at about 7 pm.

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

BNP demos

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decision.

It decided to declare country-wide street agitation, if necessary, in support of the demand.

The meeting alleged the ruling party, since assumption of power, continued killing, attack, filing of false case, arrest and character assassination to destroy BNP under a blueprint.

Meanwhile, an emergency joint meeting of Dhaka city BNP and its different front organisations will be held tomorrow at 5 pm at the party central office.

City BNP Convenor Sadek Hossain Khoka MP has requested all the city unit members, presidents and secretaries of front organisations, and BNP supported commissioners of Dhaka City Corporation to attend the meeting, said a press release yesterday.

BTV

From page 1

them of "transparency, accountability and sincerity".

The meeting took place at the office of the National Broadcasting Authority in the afternoon.

A BTV source told The Daily Star last night that the DG informed the BNP delegates that the planned programme of the Leader of the Opposition would be broadcast under arrangements similar to those done for the Prime Minister's programme earlier. In reply the BNP representatives said they needed further discussions in the party on the matter.

However, the sources said, minor changes in planning the Opposition leader's programme could be made through "mutual understanding". BTV sources said, hinting at further discussions on the issue.

None of the BNP delegates was available for comment.

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Court rejects Laloo's bail prayer

PATNA, July 24: A court refused today to grant protection from arrest to a leader of India's ruling coalition who is a suspect in a massive corruption case, reports AP.

The ruling could clear the way for the jailing of Laloo Prasad Yadav, the chief minister of the state of Bihar and a powerful personality in Prime Minister I K Gujral's coalition, the United Front.

Yadav said he will now appeal to the Supreme Court in New Delhi, United News of India news agency reported. Yadav said he is talking to his lawyers, who will probably file the appeal tomorrow.

News of the decision by the Bihar High Court in Patna sent the Bombay stock market — India's largest bourse — plunging by one per cent in 25 minutes, a sign that investors viewed it as further destabilising the shaky 3-month-old government.

Yadav is being investigated in the alleged swindle of tens of millions of dollars from the state treasury earmarked to buy livestock feed. He has denied wrongdoing.

The Central Bureau of Investigation, which is prosecuting the case, had argued to the court that it wanted Yadav's arrest so that he could not tamper with the evidence.

Yadav had filed a separate plea in the High Court in Patna, capital of Bihar, saying he should be let off on bail if police arrest him. The judge threw out his plea.

In his order, Judge DS Dhalwal said he is convinced that excess money was withdrawn from state funds, which could not have been possible without a conspiracy. Press Trust of India news agency reported. He said if the allegations were true, it would be an "offense against the nation." PTI reported.

In New Delhi, Gujral and his

ministers discussed the ruling and favoured Yadav's resignation, PTI reported quoting unnamed sources as saying.

Gujral has repeatedly urged Yadav to quit as chief minister of Bihar, but many parties in his coalition have rejected that suggestion.

Probe body formed: Steps taken to face emergency power crisis

A six-member committee has been constituted to find out the cause of Wednesday's power grid failure that plunged most parts of the country into darkness for hours, reports UNB.

The committee was formed in a high-level meeting of the Energy Ministry yesterday. Secretary Dr Toufiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury was in the chair, said a press release.

Headed by PDB Member (Distribution) Rafiqul Islam as convenor, the committee has been asked to submit its report to the authority within seven days.

The meeting also took a number of decisions to avert recurrence of such incident.

It decided to formulate a code of operating standard procedures for both PDB and Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) for tackling emergency power crisis.

An information centre has been opened at Ulan Grid Substation to feed information on power supply situation to the consumers and news media during emergency. Its telephone numbers are 410354, 405304 and 9333940.

Magurchhara fire

From page 1

mounting as officers and employees have been compelled to take additional responsibilities for an uncertain period. They have no idea about the future of the Magurchhara well and when rail and road links will be restored.

Believe us, there is no plan, whatsoever, about restoration of the rail or road links, said a high official at Srimangal. "Prices of essentials here have gone up. We don't know how long we can sustain peoples' sentiment against Occidental," he said.

If there was any plan or forecast (about the well and rail/road links), we could have proceeded with a plan to set up an alternative rail and road link," he pointed out.

The Sylhet-Srimangal trainline, some 50 yards from the disaster zone, remained inoperative for the last 40 days.

The road link between Srimangal and Kamalganj has also been affected. Buses and trucks are using an alternative route. This has increased the transportation cost and the time.

The district administration has increased security measures at Srimangal railway station following complaints that inter-district passengers are being cheated by unscrupulous people there. Srimangal is the transit point between Sylhet district and rest of the country.

Meanwhile the work for raising barbed wire fencing around the gas well area continued. A team of The Daily Star attempted to visit the dis-

aster area again today but was refused entry for the second time.

"It's very dangerous to go in there and there is nothing much to say," said a fire fighting expert of Occidental.

Occidental has started selecting a new site for drilling a relief well. A helipad is being set up in Moulvibazar for faster communication.

At the site, eight bulldozers and two heavy trucks were kept standby.

Meanwhile, the drilling rig and other equipment brought from Thailand and Singapore are being transported to Moulvibazar for relief operation in the exploded Magurchhara gaswell, according to UNB.

The Occidental will start drilling operation for a relief well with the help of the rig at the gasfield within a few days, company officials informed the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources in a meeting yesterday.

The meeting at the ministry was attended by Secretary Dr Toufiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, Petrobangla Chairman M Mosharraf Hossain and two officials of the US-based Occidental Company — Dr Nicholson and Mr Hopkins.

The company officials said presence of gas-bubbles was now limited within half km-long and quarter km-wide area centering the well. The inflammable bubbles were found mainly in low-lying areas.

Such popping gas could not cause a big fire like that of last month, they said.



Garments workers staged a sit-in in front of the BGMEA office in the city to press home their demands yesterday. —Star photo

President: Values evaporating

From page 1

about it while in opposition, sidetracks it when coming to power."

The President said that the civil society was "very alert about it and expressed the hope that "under the present government, the long expectation of the people for independence of the judiciary, including its separation from the executive, will be realised."

Turning to the role of civil society movement, Shahabuddin said it aims at creating a society in which its members can live in peace, honour and dignity free from fear of any kind.

"It cooperates with the state functionaries for promoting democracy in its truest form — a democracy which presupposes free and fair elections and guarantees effective participation of the people in the decision making process at all levels of administration."

He also said that the civil society movements "also strive

for pollution free environment, realisation of human rights, solution of problems like poverty, illiteracy, migration, social conflict and elimination of discrimination against women."

Of course, these are also aims and objectives of a government, but civil society comes forward when the government fails to meet the people's expectation; it may also self take initiative or cooperate with the government in achieving these objectives," the President said.

Earlier, he said transparency in governance and accountability of the state functionaries are essential requirements of a good government.

In his brief speech at the inaugural session, Justice Habibur Rahman said "In the last few decades the old term of civil society has suddenly got increasingly wide currency due to the proven inadequacy of state in the governance of the society." He also underlined the need for an independent judi-

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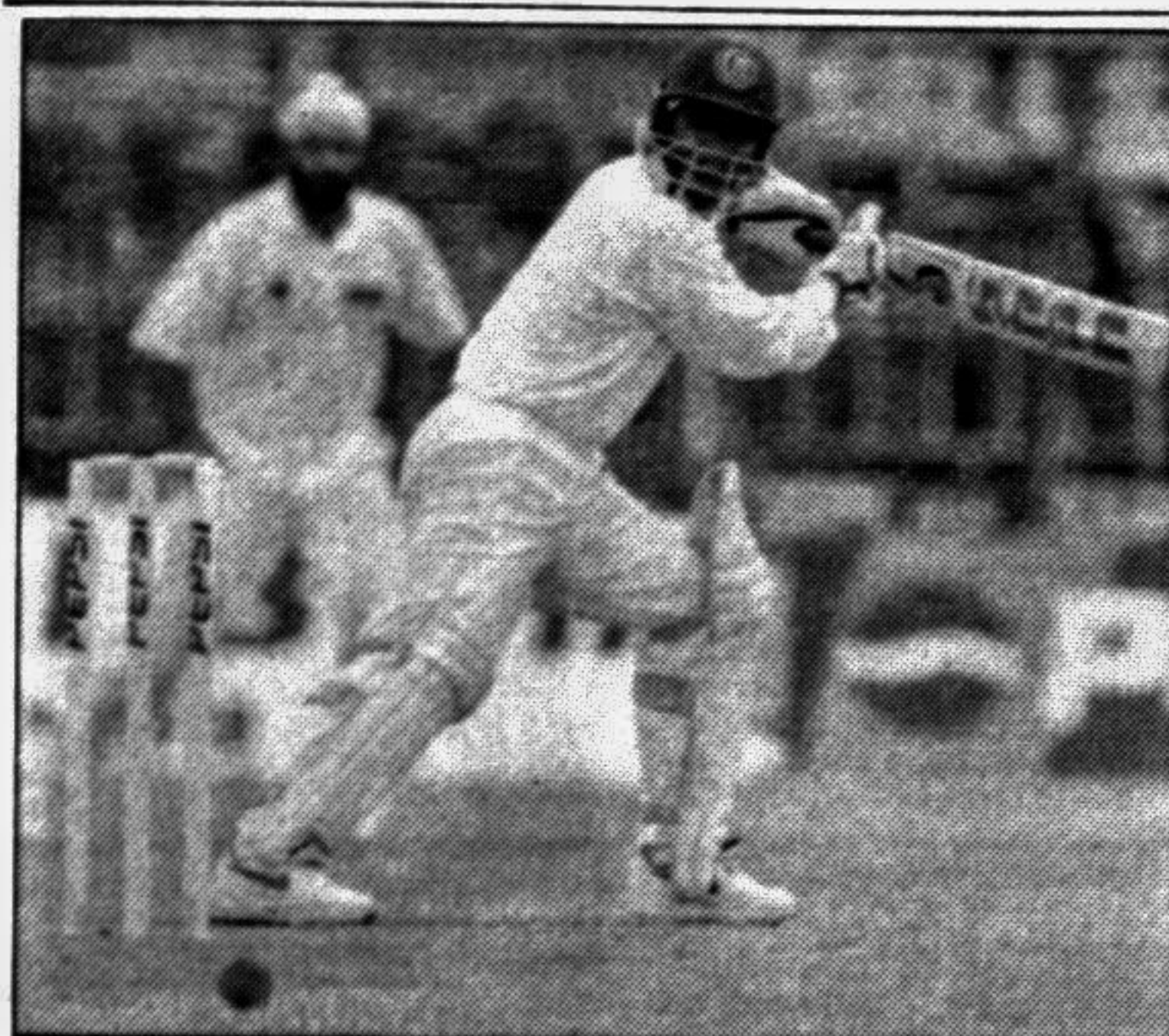
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Bangladesh batsman Athar Ali Khan runs the ball down to third man during yesterday's Asia Cup tournament match against India in Colombo. —AP/UNB photo

India storm into final

From page 1

Pakistan — but with a superior net run-rate.

Sri Lanka won all their league matches while Bangladesh, who have qualified for the 1999 World Cup, failed to win a single game.

India, electing to field, restricted Bangladesh to 130 for eight in 43 overs before a heavy shower ended the innings five overs early and left the Indians just 20 overs to win.

The Indians rode on seamer Robin Singh's three for 13 from nine overs to keep Bangladesh in check.

Bangladesh, who were 104 for eight at one stage, recovered through a defiant ninth-wicket stand of 26 between Mafizur Rahman (15 not out) and Sheikh Salahuddin (three not out).

The match began on a controversial note as the Indians protested against the groundsman's decision to hand the wicket to the umpires only at noon (local time) because of early morning rain.

Umpires KT Francis of Sri Lanka and Nazir Junior of Pakistan accepted the Indians' plea that the outfield had dried sufficiently to start play at 11:30 am, but reduced the game to 48-

overs-a-side.

Indian seamers Abey Kuruvilla and Venkatesh Prasad picked up a wicket apiece by the seventh over, in which Bangladesh managed to score just 12 runs.

Athar Ali Khan (33) and Aminul Islam (30) raised hopes of a Bangladesh fightback before both fell in the first overs of Tendulkar and Robin Singh respectively.

Athar, who made Bangladesh's highest score of 82 against Pakistan, fell leg before to Tendulkar's fourth delivery to make it 57 for three in the 22nd over.

Aminul Islam was 13 when umpire Nazir Junior turned down a confident appeal for a catch at the wicket off Saurav Ganguly even as television replays showed a clear edge.

But the error did not prove costly for the Indians as Aminul drove Robin Singh's second delivery on the up to mid-off where Anil Kumble made no mistake.

Skipper Akram Khan was removed by Kumble, returning for his second spell in the 32nd over, and two more wickets fell in the 37th over as Bangladesh slipped to 104 for eight.

—Scoreboard on Page-10

Money-changer licences given to 39 more firms

Bangladesh Bank has approved the issuance of money-changer licences to 39 more firms and companies, expanding the foreign currency-exchange facility to more areas of the country, reports UNB.

A central bank announcement yesterday said that the applications of the firms and companies had been approved in the second phase pursuing the recent decision of the bank.

Approval was given against the backdrop of recent argument by the existing money changers that the present foreign currency laws are not favourable, and thus they are unable to kickstart their business.

The central bank has earlier given approval to the applications of 16 firms and companies. The latest endorsement raised the total number of money changers in the country to 55.

The region-wise distribution of the licences is as follows: Dhaka-40, Chittagong-3, Khulna-3, Sathkira-1, Benapole-5, Rajshahi-1, Sylhet-1 and Bogra-1. Earlier, licences were given to the firms from Dhaka, Chittagong and Sathkira.

The announcement said more such applications received from different parts of the country are under consideration of the bank.

The firms who were given licences are Delta Bureau O Change Ltd., NZ Money Exchange, Bogra Money Changer, Global Money Changer, BB Money Exchange, MS Money Changer, Jonopriya Money Exchange Service, Capital Money

Changer, Alam Money Changer, Sub Money Exchange Ltd, Wall Street Money Exchange, City Money Exchange Ltd, Ikram Money Changing Agency, Alam Money Exchange, Metro Money Exchange, Dhaka Money Changer, Secured Money Exchange, Apollo Money Changing Agency, Jahangir Money Changer, The City Exchange House, K&K Exchange International, Unique Money Exchange House, Foreign Currency Exchange Centre, The Liaison Money Exchange Ltd, AZ Money Changer Ltd, Rajeeb Money Changer, BH Money Changer, Loknath Money Exchange, Pioneer Money Changer, Galaxy Exchange Ltd, Tarin Money Changer, Goodwill Money Exchange, Sylhet Foreign Money Exchange, Shapla Money Changing Co Ltd, Rajdhami Money Exchange Ltd, Zahed Money Changer, Reliance Money Changer, Vision Money Exchange and Enam Money Exchange.

DU hall

From page 1

reportedly led by their leader Shamim Ahmed, captured the hall.

They ousted the activists of the JCD from the hall. The BCL activists clashed with the police when they entered the hall at about 1 pm as they were prevented at the entrance of the hall witnesses said, police resorted to lathicharge.

Some five rounds of gunshots were heard from the Jashimuddin hall area during the incident.

The Vice-Chancellor met the leaders of the JCD and BCL at 4 pm. At the meeting an agreement was reached under which the ousted activists would be rehabilitated immediately. It was decided that the students, only who have identity cards, would be allowed to enter the hall. Accordingly, the police urged the students to vacate the hall.

But the leaders of the JCD did not go with VC as per the agreement reached at the meeting. The VC went to the hall in the evening and allowed some to enter the hall. The BCL leaders were checking the identity cards at that time in front of the VC, the witnesses said.

The authorities again locked the gate of the hall and the students were waiting in front of the hall till 8:30 last night.

Meanwhile, the Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA) in a statement yesterday expressed its concern over the deteriorating law and order situation on the campus.

The DUTA urged the law-enforcing agencies to take necessary action for restoring peaceful academic atmosphere in the university.

'BNP believes in religious freedom'

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday called upon all, irrespective of caste and creed, to unite under the leadership of Begum Khaleda Zia to protect country's independence and sovereignty, democracy and religious freedom, reports UNB.

He made the call when a group of leaders from Hindu Chhatra Parishad formally joined BNP, expressing their allegiance to the leadership of Begum Zia and programmes and policies of the main opposition party.

Bhuiyan said, BNP is a political party which believes in religious freedom, but neither in secularism nor in fanaticism.

"Door of BNP is always open for communities of all faiths. BNP does not believe in impunity in the name of secularism nor does it believe in fanaticism in the name of politics of religion," he told the function at the party central office.

Airport

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However, an inquiry committee has found that the diversion of the Sylhet-bound flight to Calcutta was unnecessary. It held the captain of the flight responsible causing a loss of Tk 3.17 lakh due to the diversion. Necessary action has also been taken against him, said ministry officials.

In the country, only ZIA is kept open for 24 hours and the seven other airports, outside Dhaka, are closed by 6 pm if there is no flight in the evening.

Khatib

From page 1

Ahmed leave the dai without delivering his address.

The Khatib denied the charge.

Meanwhile, the Central Working Council of Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday strongly criticised the government for serving the showcause notice on Maulana Obaidul Haq. Presided over by Prof Golam Azam the meeting urged the government to withdraw the notice. It alleged that the move was aimed at replacing the Khatib with an Awami League man.

It also alleged that the statements of Awami League leaders and ministers urging party loyalists to offer Friday prayer at Baitul Mukarram to recover it "from the hands of Zionists" are acts of provocation to create disturbance at Jumma prayer. It urged the government to refrain from such provocative activities.

Eden college

From page 1

leave.

However, students of the three dormitories — New Degree, Zubunnessa and Razia Halls — vacated the hostels by 5 pm.

A large number of women police were deployed in and around the college last night while senior police officials were monitoring the situation.

BB order

From page 1

letter to the Finance Ministry adding comments that such investigation should have been done by the Finance Ministry through the BB. It also said such investigation will jeopardise the BB's efforts to bring discipline in the banking system.

Fifth Plan

From page 1

maintained that the industrial sector would not grow if individuals were required to give more than 20 per cent equity.

He further said that to achieve the plan target, export earnings would have to be increased by 22 per cent and import by 11 per cent.

The draft plan also targeted generation of 6.23 crore employment opportunities during the period.

The 11-member panel will complete its recommendations by August 20.

The 10 other members of the panel are: Dr A H Shadat Ullah, Advisor, Planning Commission; Dr A I Aminul Islam, economist; Dr Abu Ahmed Abdullah, Director General of BIDS; Prof Zahurul Haq Economics Department of Dhaka University; Prof Mahfuzul Haq, Economics Department of Chittagong University; Prof Sanat Kumar Saha, Economics Department of Rajshahi University; Prof Abdul Bayes, Economics Department of Jahangirnagar University; Ataur Rahman Raiser, economist; Devapriya Bhattacharya, fellow, BIDS and Dr Mohammad Parashad of East West University.

The Fourth Five Year Plan expired in 1995.

All the previous five-year plans had targeted average annual growth of around five per cent but more than four per cent could not be achieved.

The draft FYPP noted that despite large inflow of foreign assistance during the previous years, the people of the country could not be freed from extreme poverty.

Only the social sector performed somewhat better, particularly health and population sectors, it added.